

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, May 25, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Paris, May 25, 1895. My darling Alec:

I was so glad to get two letters from you early this morning. I was beginning to get a little homesick, I hadn't heard for so long. Please do write for I need your letters.

I think you wrote a very handsome note to Professor Langley and I am glad his flying machine works. Rather him than that conceited old Maxim and rather you than either. How does this affect you? Will you have to stop experimenting or do you think Professor Langley has left something for you to achieve? I don't want you to give up. It was for that that I was willing to come over alone instead of asking that you should come over also. I think it's awfully funny about the police court treating your case so cavalierly I thought it was only in the old world that things moved so slowly. I am glad that at least you are through with the affair now and safe at home. I hope you will let me know how it terminated.

Here is an extract I came across this evening —“it may be safely asserted that at present large eyes and beautiful faces are as rare among Frenchwomen as are poor figures. They are admired, too, in France with an intensity not untinctured with envy. For large eyes especially, this admiration is universally unmeasured.” This may account for the unusual number of complimentary remarks we have heard on Elsie's eyes. I always thought them beautiful, but never before found my own opinion so universally confirmed by that of others.

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Miss Tarbel's friend, the Madame Blanc of whom I have stood in such tremendous are, sailed down on me this afternoon with all colors flying and took me at greater disadvantage than I have been at for a long time. Still matters might have been worse. I called on her on Thursday in great state as fine and spruce as you please and she was out, so I left cards. Next day came a note from her asking me to call on Sunday, consequently I made sure she wouldn't come herself. Well this afternoon Daisy was lying on the bed, Elsie was writing and I reading in my dressing jacket, being tired after fixing my flowers, when there came a knock at the door and in walked my friend! I was never more completely taken by surprise because hitherto all visitors have been announced, but this one was simply told to walk up and in. I don't know what she thought. I did not apologize and after all my dressing jacket is very pretty and I had just finished making my hair and my room pretty, the one with crimps and the other with magnificent peonies and lilies-of-the-valley, so matters might have been worse. Mme. Blanc is large and stout and not young and not very well dressed, but she impressed me as a woman of power. She does not approve of Miss Tarbel's writing that life of Napoleon. She said it was necessarily a rehash of what had already been sufficiently written about and that Miss Tarbel had the ability to write most interestingly of things little known outside about Paris. I am to call on her tomorrow at two with the children. I expect to have a busy day of it tomorrow. In the morning I am going to the Presbyterian church with the children, then to Mme. Blanc, then to the flower show, winding up with a drive in the Bois de Boulogne in a livery stable carriage. 3 This morning I went to the Market with the children. It is enormous, There are two big new buildings in the form of a Greek cross, the square formed by the arms being devoted to different things. I bought cherries and strawberries and our arms full of flowers. They are so cheap and so beautiful now that it is hard not to buy too many.

Sunday: I was too tired and sleepy to write more last night and now it is evening of the fourth day here and I am waiting for my water to boil before making some cocoa for the children's "nightcap". This morning Elsie and I went to the Presbyterian church and in the afternoon we dressed up fine and called on Mme. Blanc and went to the Flower show

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and that other show in the Bois de Boulogne. We drove there until I was tired yet never reached the lake so thick were the carriages, most of them private ones. I never before saw such immense hats or brilliant variegated flower beds. Mr. Martin would turn green with envy. It was not uncommon to see such violent contrasts as big bunches of red poppies, bright blue cornflowers with brilliant yellow ribbons, all on the same hat. The paper says Paris has not known so much color for years and truly these hats are a sight to be seen to be appreciated. I thought Elsie's hat very bright in Washington, here it is so dull I am contemplating brightening it up, say with deep crimson roses shading to pink, a dozen lilies-of-the-valley and a bright green satin ribbon. What do you say to that?

I did make a mistake in not calling on Mme. Blanc before, for she is a very fine woman and evidently ready to help if she only knew how, and I would like help, but don't know exactly what it is I want or rather I do but don't like to ask it, especially just now. I want some introductions to pleasant French people for my daughters so that they may make friends and learn to know these people for what they really are, not what they appear to be on the surface or in fashionable life. But the children are not ready to take advantage of such opportunities yet and of course I can't anyway. Mme. Blanc has offered to get invitations and tickets for the College of France course and will come and see me again before she leaves for the country. Perhaps I will ask her then, she's really friendly. She says Elsie is certainly old enough for singing lessons. Daisy there might be some doubt about, but she remarked that Daisy had a very musical voice. She spoke French to Elsie and English to me, in what Daisy said was charming French, English I could understand her pretty well. At the flower show we saw countless thousands of roses, red, white, yellow, brilliant yellow, scarlet and green. The immense tents were full of their fragrance. Then there were glorious rhododendrons and exquisite orchids, thousands of them but after all not so much variety. In the Bois de Boulogne we passed Lady Randolph Churchill and her sister. We thought she was going out pretty soon after her husband's and Mother's deaths. She is a fine looking woman, but rather discontented looking woman. Miss Duncan was with us

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and we had a livery stable carriage. I wanted to do something for her, she has helped me so much.

Tomorrow the children begin work in earnest. They have two lessons in the convent and play with the children in the garden and go to walk with Mlle. Philipi in the afternoon.

Goodnight dear. If 5 you are disappointed in finding that the contents of this fat envelope are not entirely for you, you will be able to sympathize with my feelings on finding my big envelopes from you principally enclose letters to the children. I don't like it.

Ever your own Mabel.